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Gay groups plan rodeos despite call for boycott

By **Louis Aguilar**/Gazette Telegraph

Gay rodeos are planned for Colorado Springs and Denver this year despite the continued call of some gay rights groups to boycott the state.

"This is my home. I was born and raised here. I don't intend to leave," said an organizer of the Colorado Springs Gay Rodeo Association who wanted to be identified only as Norman.

For the third year in a row, the Colorado Springs Gay Rodeo will be held in September at Penrose Stadium. The event is expected to draw about 150 participants and 300 spectators.

In Denver, the International Gay Rodeo Association is expected to attract up to 6,000 people when it holds its 11th annual event during the Fourth of July weekend.

Organizers said they never entertained the idea of endorsing the boycott of Colorado, which many gay rights supporters nationwide have backed because of the state's passage of Amendment 2 in November. The measure would ban laws that protect gays from discrimination based on their sexual orientation.

■ Oregon measure has roots in Springs/**B5**

"We've always felt the majority of gays in Colorado didn't support the boycott," said Wayne Jakino, the founder of the International Gay Rodeo Association, based in Denver. "This is our home, and we are here to make friends, and making those kind of statements doesn't really advance that."

Both groups maintain they are nonpolitical, but gay rights issues have caused a divisive political debate in Colorado and nationwide because of such measures as Amendment 2.

In Enumclaw, Wash., the town of 5,400 is divided over a planned gay rodeo.

"We do have some fears about this year," Jakino said. "We do this to lift the spirits of our community, and we never sought publicity. But that seems unavoidable this year."

In Colorado Springs, there is talk of a march or a gay rights rally to coincide with the gay rodeo, but it's speculation at this point.

"What other people do is really up to them, but that's not the aim of our rodeo," Norman said. "We do it because we like Colorado Springs. Is that a political statement? You tell me."

Boycott Colorado officials couldn't be reached for comment. A spokesman for the Colorado Springs gay rights group Ground Zero, which supports the boycott, said the group doesn't have a problem with the gay rodeo.

"It's not our stance to vilify any group that doesn't agree with the boycott," said Franklin Whitworth. "I hope they come here and have a good time."

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